

'Diagnosis ... Serious!'

By Col. Doug Richardson
48th Fighter Wing commander

He was a world-class athlete, with mental focus, herculean strength, dexterity, agility and endurance. But as we soon find out, death was able to sneak right through this tough exterior.

One day, out of the blue, the athlete started feeling light-headed. There was also a little tingle in his arm and he started to feel more tired than usual and a little drained after his daily workout. But being the macho athlete that he was, he didn't want to believe anything could be wrong. Actually, he was a bit afraid that if he went to the doctor, she would find something serious (not that this fear has ever happened to any of us!).

So months and years passed. He still won races, and for the most part his arms, legs, head and body looked fit, at least externally. His performance gradually got worse until he was no longer winning races. In fact, he wasn't even considered a contender. After he died, the story broke. For months, it appears a cancer was growing that eventually overcame the athlete. The cancer was cunning, as many are, not affecting all the cells, but only a few key ones. Nevertheless, it went unchecked and killed the athlete. The whole story was

made even more sad because the cancer was curable, if it had been caught on time. There were enough telltale signs that, if he had had the courage to admit something was wrong to his doctor, he might be alive today – on the winner's block.

Doctors tell us that the human body is an incredibly resilient system, composed of millions of unique, specially designed, intra-functional cells and organs. I can think of no better analogy for our community and our fighter wing. The *athlete's body* symbolizes our combined community – the Liberty Wing – truly a world-class wing, with a winning record and "herculean strength, mental focus, endurance and etc. ..." The *unique cells* represent each and every one of us – active-duty military, civilians, family members, civil servants and Ministry of Defence members. The *organs* in this community are our groups, our agencies, our squadrons and our special service units. The *affliction* in the above analogy is alcohol abuse.

And the *diagnosis: serious!*

So now the secret is out. Just as the unchecked cancer killed the athlete in the story above, alcohol abuse threatens our community if we don't do something to stop it now.

Alcohol abuse is the number one problem we face in our wing today.

-- Col. Doug Richardson
Wing commander

No, we're not going to go out and restart "prohibition." The problem isn't alcohol. It's alcohol abuse! This is a unique affliction, however, because it is focused on specific cells just like the athlete's cancer. It's mainly attacking 18 - 25-year-old cells, although there's ample proof that it can and will destroy

anything in its path if unchecked! It's very cunning and many cells under attack don't even know it until it's too late. Often those afflicted can be heard saying, "I'm not an alcoholic! I don't have a problem."

Let me tell you a true story. My dad was 18 when he went off to New Guinea during World War II. He came back an alcoholic. It took him 25 years to admit it. He told me that his "admission" was his *second* big step to recovery. His first step was when he realized he wasn't in control of alcohol, but rather that "it" was in control of him! He told me this story when I was around 19 years old and on my own. He told me because he didn't want me to go through what he and our family went through.

I live here now with you and I pass this on, albeit somewhat reluctantly, but in the greatest hope that you will read and heed it. Alcohol abuse is the number one problem

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Editorial staff

Col. Doug Richardson 48th Fighter Wing commander

Capt. Patrick Ryder Public affairs chief

MSgt. Donald S. Martin Public affairs NCOIC

SSgt. Steve Ball Editor

SrA. Sarah Franco Staff writer

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On the cover

Photo by SSgt. Steve Ball

Alcohol shatters lives. For more information, see pages 4, 12 and 13.

One team ... win or lose

By Col. Steve Paladini
Vice Wing Commander

Team Liberty is like a professional football team. We practice, we improve and we execute as one squad. Some days we're all in synch; other days our timing is a little off.

But first and foremost we're a team, regardless if we win or lose the game. We take care of each other along the way, whether on or off the field of play, and individual problems are viewed as "team" problems. Thus, we police ourselves and help each other out, for the betterment of the team's cohesion and ultimately our success on the field.

As I approach my position on the line of scrimmage, I pause a moment to ensure that there's the right amount of people on the field, that everyone is in the correct position for the upcoming play. Eyes up and focused, scrutinizing the defense and with heightened adrenaline, I'm poised for the ball to be set in motion and for the play to begin. But there's a problem already. I'm preoccupied about several of my fellow team members.

One reeks of booze; another has blood-shot, dilated eyes from pregame sips of whiskey; a third is vomiting from a bad hangover; a fourth is wearing a back brace from a DUI accident the day before. And then I hear it ... first it's a soft chuckle from an opposing lineman, then the line judge starts to chortle, then slowly but steadily the entire stadium fills with laughter. We're not ready to put the ball in motion. We're not ready to play at all. We're not even a team anymore. The game is lost.

We don't have to lose. We elect to by abusing alcohol or ignoring the fact that there's a problem. We often think only about our own individual welfare; that drunk is somebody else's problem. The team owner and medic will take care of him, right? It's not my job. Why should I get involved? I have my own problems to deal with. That drunk is really hurting himself. After all, drunks have a right to drink; who am I to say otherwise? Abusing alcohol is a personal decision; there's nothing I can do!

And what do the drunks say? Drinking is perfectly legal and relaxes me. I can drive

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